Intermontanus

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NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Man Kisses Rattlesnake and Dies

Santa Rosa, Calif. - A Lake County Man who caught a baby rattlesnake while fishing died after being bitten on the lip while examining his catch, authorities said.

The Sonoma County coroner's office, which reported Daniel Pearls death Sunday, said it was the first time in memory that a person had died in the area from a rattlesnake bite.

"It's true people do get bitten while hiking, but most times it happens when people are playing with them," Said Susan Kim, a clinical pharmacist for a poison-control center. " They are not pets."

Some 6,000 to 8,000 people nationwide suffer rattlesnake bites each year but few die, Kim said. Most become ill.

Kim also Said baby rattlesnakes can be more dangerous than adults, because they don't yet control the amount of venom released in a bite.

This article appeared in the Salt Lake Tribune on 13 May 1992. I question the statement that baby rattlesnakes don't control the amount of venom released, but I do not know of any data on the subject. If anyone knows of a study on the ability of baby vipers to control venom release, please send it to me.

The following two articles were written by Salt Lake Tribune staff writers and are reproduced here with permission of the Tribune editor.

Plan to Protect Desert Tortoise, Develop Land Fails

Development of a plan that would protect desert tortoises and clear the way for development in Washington County has collapsed.

Scott Hirschi, Washington County commissioner, said efforts to develop the so called "habitat conservation plan" [HCP] bogged down over questions about who should pay for the planning process, which lands should be designated as tortoise preserves and which should be opened for development.

Although the planning group voted to cancel all future meetings, Mr. Hirschi contends the process "is not dead." He is confident the group will try again to make the process work.

Washington County is one of [the] fastest growing areas of the state, but much of the developable land in the St. George area already is home to the desert tortoise - an animal protected under the federal Endangered Species Act because of its declining numbers throughout the Southwest. It is a crime to kill, harass or bother a desert tortoise, or destroy its habitat.

The county's growth also is constrained by two endangered fish that live in the Virgin River, the main source of drinking and irrigation water, and several endangered plants.

The goal of the HCP was to set aside large, secure preserves for the tortoise. In return the developers would be allowed to build homes, golf courses and shopping centers in some of the low-value tortoise habitat. Similar compromises have been made on lands near Las Vegas, Nev. and Palm Springs, Calif.

Jim Doyle, a developer who owns 2,500 acres of desert tortoise habitat near St. George, said land owners felt they were being asked to bear too much of the burden of protecting the animals. "Generally, this is viewed down here as a public problem. But the public agencies don't want to pay. They want the landowners to pay."

Steve Johnson, a desert tortoise expert from Tucson who represented the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance and the Humane Society of the United States on the planning committee, said developers in Washington County don't realize how much they need the HCP.

He encouraged the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to enforce aggressively the law protecting desert tortoises. This would bring most development in Washington County to a halt and force the landowners to reconsider their options.

Mr. Hirschi said the HCP process was started to avoid the economic hardship that would occur if the federal government enforced the tortoise-protection laws. However, many residents now view the HCP process as the source of their problem, rather than the solution. (By Jim Woolf, *Salt Lake Tribune*, 14 April 1992).

Utahn Goes to Jail, Shells Out $250 For Riding Off With a Desert Tortoise

James Stephenson nearly squashed a desert tortoise last week while four-wheeling in the Red Hills north of St. George. He veered to miss the 7-pound reptile, then hefted it onto the passenger seat as a present for his girlfriend's little girl.

The gift cost Mr. Stephenson five nights in jail and a $250 fine.

"I am going to put it back," said Mr. Stephenson. "I was locked down with a guy who'd been convicted of killing two people. I didn't sleep at all. I just made jokes about turtle soup and tried not to offend anyone."

The 36-year-old Dixie College student, who lives in a St. George motel, is the first Utahn charged with a felony for possessing an animal classified by state law as a prohibited species.

This year the Legislature increased the penalty from a class A misdemeanor to a third-degree felony for possessing an animal considered threatened under federal law. The desert tortoise is on that federal list.

On May 6, the Division of Wildlife Resources [DWR] got an anonymous tip about a tortoise in a motel room. DWR officer John Schijf said Mr. Stephenson invited him in to see the tortoise munching lettuce in the middle of the bed.

Mr. Stephenson was booked into the Washington County Jail and was unable to pay the $5,000 bail. On Monday, he pleaded guilty to a class A misdemeanor in a plea bargain with prosecutors. He was sentenced to pay the $250 fine and serve the five days he had already spent in jail.

"That was fair," said Mr. Schijf "after all, he'd already done time, and he really didn't hurt the poor thing."

The tortoise remains in state custody. Once kept as pets, tortoises will not survive in the wild. They also may have contracted a respiratory virus that decimates tortoise populations in the desert.

Instead, it will be transferred to Salt Lake City, where it may be adopted as a pet. "These beasts are excellent diggers and escape artists," said Officer Schijf. "If they escape up north, they're less likely to make the trip south and infect their fellows." (by Michael Phillips, *Salt Lake Tribune*, 13 May 1992)

Editor's note: If the HCP process resumes we'll try to let you know so your input can be considered.

If you are interested in adopting a desert tortoise contact the DWR at 1596 W. North Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84116.

FEATURES

Results of the 1992 Amphibian Count

The following is a list of the amphibians reported so far this year. Remember the amphibian survey's are not limited to the annual count. If you want a survey form contact UtAH. All of this data will be stored on UtAH's database then sent to the Disappearing Amphibian Population Task Force.

Cache County:
Ambystoma tigrinum: 30 March, Dry Lake; 6 April, Dry Lake; and 13 May, Hansen pond.
Rana pipiens: 13 April, North of Logan Airport; and 22 April, Little Bear River near Mendon.
Pseudacris triseriata: 30 March, Dry Lake; 6 April, Dry Lake; and 21 April, Little Bear River near Mendon.

Garfield County (?):
Bufo punctatus: April, Oak Canyon
Hyla arenicolor: April, Oak Canyon

Rich County:
Pseudacris triseriata: 25-26 April, 2 mi S Garden City next to Bear Lake.

San Juan County:
Ambystoma tigrinum: 10 April, 37° 35.17' N, 109° 53.71' W.
Bufo punctatus: 9 April Comb Wash.
Spea (=Scaphiopus) multiplicata: 10 April, Natural Bridges National Monument and 37° 35.17' N, 109° 53.71' W.

Washington County:
Bufo microscaphus: 25 April, Red Cliffs Recreation Area; and 15 May,Santa Clara Creek, 5 mi S Gunlock Reservoir.
Bufo punctatus: 25 April, Red Cliffs Recreation Area; and 14 May, City Creek.
Hyla arenicolor: 25 April, Red Cliffs Recreation Area; and 16 May, Emerald Pools and Narrows in Zion National Park.
Rana catesbeiana: 14 May, City Creek.

Wayne County:
Bufo woodhousii: April, near Hanksville.

Franklin, Idaho:
Ambystoma tigrinum: 1 April, ponds just west of town.
Pseudacris triseriata: 1 April, ponds just west of town.

As you can see this is a good start, but we only have reports of nine species from six counties. Let's try to find at least one of each species and an amphibian in every county. In fact why limit it to amphibians? Let's do the same for the reptiles. Currently our reptile list includes:

Cache County:
Sceloporus g. graciosus; Charina bottae; Coluber constrictor mormon; Pituophis melanoleucus deserticola; Thamnophis elegans vagrans; and *Crotalus viridis lutosus.*

San Juan County:
Sceloporus g. graciosus; Sceloporus undulatus elongatus; Urosaurus ornatus wrighti; Eumeces multivirgatus epipleurotus; and *Crotalus v. viridis.*

Tooele County:
Sceloporus g. graciosus; Uta s. stansburiana; and *Pituophis melanoleucus deserticola.*

Utah County:
Sceloporus g. graciosus; Uta s. stansburiana; Coluber constrictor mormon; Masticophis t. taeniatus Thamnophis elegans vagrans; and *Crotalus viridis lutosus.*

Washington County:
Gopherus agassizii; Callisaurus draconoides rhodostictus; Gambelia w. wislizenii; Sauromalus o. obesus; Sceloporus g. graciosus; Sceloporus magister uniformis; Sceloporus undulatus elongatus; Uta stansburiana stejnegeri; Cnemidophorus tigris septentrionalis; Cnemidophorus velox; Xantusia v. vigilis; Masticophis flagellum piceus; and *Sonora semiannulata.*

Additional species from Mojave County, Arizona (within 10 miles of Washington County):
Dipsosaurus d. dorsalis; and *Salvadora hexalepis mojavensis.*

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Intermontanus
Editor: Breck Bartholomew

All board members and editors are volunteers.

Membership: $7.00/year; includes six issues of *Intermontanus* and participation in all association activities. Send correspondence to: UtAH, 195 West 200 North, Logan UT 84321-3905.

Common and Scientific Names of the Amphibians and Reptiles of Utah

Amphibians:
Ambystoma tigrinum nebulosum - Arizona Tiger Salamander.
A. t. melanostictum - Blotched Tiger Salamander.
Bufo b. boreas - Boreal Toad
B. cognatus - Great Plains Toad
B. m. microscaphus - Arizona Toad
B. punctatus - Red-spotted Toad
B. w. woodhousii - Woodhouse's Toad
Hyla arenicolor - Canyon Treefrog
Pseudacris (=Hyla) regilla - Pacific Treefrog
P. triseriata - Western Chorus Frog
Rana Catesbeiana - Bullfrog*
R. clamitans - Green Frog
R. onca - Relict Leopard Frog**
R. pipiens - Northern Leopard Frog
R. pretiosa - Spotted Frog
Spea (=Scaphiopus) bombifrons - Plains Spadefoot
S. intermontana - Great Basin Spadefoot
S. multiplicata - New Mexico Spadefoot

Reptiles:
Apalone (=Trionyx) spinifera emoryi - Texas Spiny Softshell*
Chelydra s. serpentina - Common Snapping Turtle*
Chrysemys picta belli - Western Painted Turtle*
Gopherus agassizii - Desert Tortoise
Callisaurus draconoides rhodostictus - Mojave Zebratail Lizard
Cnemidophorus tigris septentrionalis - Northern Whiptail
C. t. tigris - Great Basin Whiptail
C. velox - Plateau Striped Whiptail
Coleonyx variegatus utahensis - Utah Banded Gecko
Crotaphytus bicinctores - Mojave Black-collard Lizard
C. collaris auriceps - Yellowhead Collard Lizard
Dipsosaurus d. dorsalis - Desert Iguana
Eumeces multivirgatus epipleurotus (=gaigeae) - Variable Skink
E. skiltonianus utahensis - Great Basin Skink
Gambelia wislizenii punctata - Pale Leopard Lizard
G. w. wislizenii - Longnose Leopard Lizard
Heloderma suspectum cinctum - Banded Gila Monster
Holbrookia maculata approximans - Speckled Earless Lizard
Phrynosoma douglassii brevirostre - Eastern Short-horned Lizard
P. d. hernandesi - Mountain Short-horned Lizard
P. d. ornatum - Salt Lake Short-horned Lizard
P. platyrhinos calidiarum - Southern Desert Horned Lizard
P. p. platyrhinos - Northern Desert Horned Lizard

Sauromalus obesus multiforaminatus - Glen Canyon Chuckwalla
S. o. obesus - Western Chuckwalla
Sceloporus g. graciosus - Northern Sagebrush Lizard
S. magister cephaloflavus - Orangehead Spiny Lizard
S. m. uniformis - Yellowback Spiny Lizard
S. occidentalis longipes - Great Basin Fence Lizard
S. undulatus elongatus - Northern Plateau Lizard
Urosaurus ornatus wrighti - Northern Tree Lizard
Uta s. stansburiana - Northern Side-blotched Lizard
U. s. stejnegeri - Desert Side-blotched Lizard
U. s. uniformis - Colorado Side-blotched Lizard
Xantusia vigilis utahensis - Utah Night Lizard
X. v. vigilis - Desert Night Lizard
Arizona elegans eburnata - Desert Glossy Snake
A. e. philipi - Painted Desert Glossy Snake
Charina bottae - Rubber Boa
Coluber constrictor mormon - Western Yellowbelly Racer
Crotalus c. cerastes - Mojave Desert Sidewinder
C. mitchelii pyrrhus - Southwestern Speckled Rattlesnake
C. s. scutulatus - Mojave Rattlesnake
C. viridis concolor - Midget Faded Rattlesnake
C. v. lutosus - Great Basin Rattlesnake
C. v. viridis - Prairie Rattlesnake
Diadophis punctatus regalis - Regal Ringneck Snake
Elaphe guttata emoryi - Great Plains Ratsnake
Hypsiglena torquata deserticola - Desert Night Snake
H. t. loreala - Mesa Verde Night Snake
H. t. ochrorhynchus - Spotted Night Snake
Lampropeltis getula californiae - California Kingsnake
L. pyromelana infralabialis - Utah Mountain Kingsnake
L. triangulum taylori - Utah Milk Snake
Leptotyphlops humilis utahensis - Utah Blind Snake
Masticophis flagellum piceus - Red Coachwhip
M. t. taeniatus - Desert Striped Whipsnake
Opheodrys vernalis - Smooth Green Snake
Pituophis melanoleucus deserticola - Great basin Gopher Snake
Rhinocheilus l. lecontei - Western Longnose Snake
Salvadora hexalepis mojavensis - Mojave Patchnose snake
Sonora semiannulata - Ground Snake
Tantilla hobartsmithi - Southwestern Blackhead Snake
Thamnophis c. cyrtopsis - Western Blackneck Garter Snake
T. elegans vagrans - Wandering Gartersnake
T. sirtalis fitchi - Valley Garter Snake
Trimorphodon biscutatus lambda - Sonoran Lyre Snake
Both *Crotalus viridis nuntius* - Hopi Rattlesnake and *Phyllorhynchus decurtatus perkinsi* - Western Leafnose snake are reported to occur in Utah, but I do not know of a verified record from the state.

* Introduced species
**Probably extinct

UTAH HERP ACCOUNT

Thamnophis cyrtopsis cyrtopsis (Kennicott 1860), Western Blackneck Garter Snake, in Utah

Legal Status. Noncontrolled: three or fewer may be collected within any six-month period, but a Certificate of Registration is required if the total number in possession exceeds three.

Description. Distinct vertebral stripe extending the length of body and separating two black nuchal blotches. Lateral stripe on the 2nd and 3rd scale rows. Top of head is gray. Ventrals, 157-178 and generally immaculate. Eight supralabials bordered with black. Anal single.

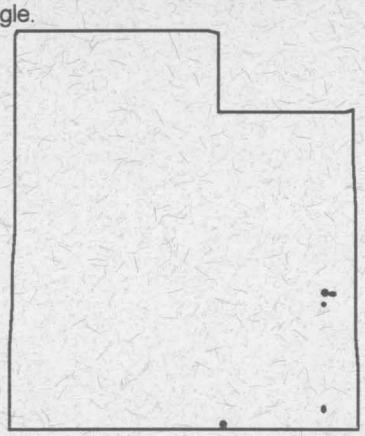

Fig. 1. Distribution of *Thamnophis c. cyrtopsis*, Western Blackneck Garter Snake, in Utah.

Range in Utah (Fig. 1). There are nine specimens from four localities in the Brigham Young University collection. Webb (1980) shows an additional record from the Rainbow Bridge area. The BYU specimens are: Moab, Grand County, #211 collected 8 June 1927, #259 collected July 1934, #1093-5 collected 8-9 June 1927, and #1176 collected July 1934; 10 miles Northwest of Moab along the Colorado River, Grand County, #30328 collected 6 May 1967; Turnbow Cabin, Arches National Park, Grand County # 30534 collected 29 July 1967; and Bluff, San Juan County, #212 collected 1 July 1927. In addition to these records, a specimen was reportedly seen near Castle Dale, Castle County, in April 1992, but this range extension remains unverified.

Habits and Habitat. These snakes frequent permanent and intermittent streams in mountains and foothills. They are viviparous, giving birth in late summer to 7-25 young. Amphibians and fish are reported to be the primary prey items.

As you can see from the collection dates, these snakes have not been reported in Utah for more than 20 years. If you happen to find one collect it (preferably live) and notify either UtAH or Dr. Douglas Cox at BYU (801) 378-5052; there are a couple of books in progress which require photographs of this species. If you are unable to collect the specimen, at least notify UtAH so the record can be added to our database.

References.

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Woodbury, A. M. 1931. A descriptive catalog of the reptiles of Utah. Bulletin of the University of Utah. **21**(5):1-129.

Wright, A.H. and A.A. Wright. 1957. Handbook of Snakes of the United States and Canada. Comstock Publishing. 1105 pp.

Breck Bartholomew, Utah State University, Logan, UT 84321

CLASSIFIED ADS

For Sale: Live mice, all sizes, below pet store prices. Contact Andy Leany, 3094 Nannyberry St., St. George, UT 84770, (801) 628-2217.

Snake Necrophilia?

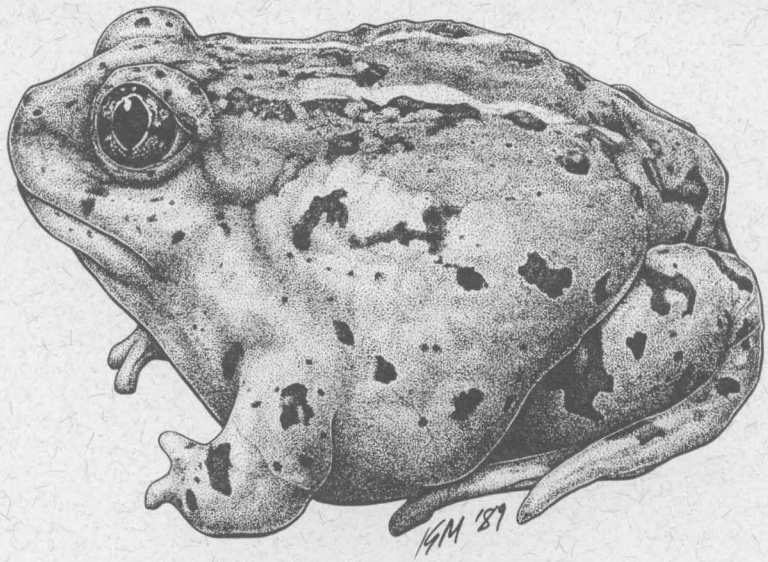
While road-cruising near Levelland, Texas on 7 May 1992, Donald Phillips found a pair of desert kingsnakes (*Lampropeltis getula splendida*). The snakes were entwined and about to breed. Happy with his catch, Mr. Phillips was carrying them back to his car when he noticed a putrid smell. As it turned out, the female was a road kill and the male apparently didn't care.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

We are planning a meeting and Barbecue for August or September. It will be held in Salt Lake. If you have any ideas for a location or a speaker let us know.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

If you have any herpetological information that you would like to share with UtAH members, please submit it for publication. We would like to publish a variety of things; from research to experiences with herps and artwork. It would be especially nice to hear from the many amateur herpetologists about their experiences. In addition, if you have questions or need information about any herpetological topic or species, let us know and we'll try to track down someone that has an answer.



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Utah Association of Herpetologists
195 West 200 North
Logan UT 84321-3905

Breck Bartholomew
Biology Department
Utah State University
Logan UT 84322-5305